DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 114 725 CG 010 181

AUTHOR Young, Howard; And Others
TITLE Evaluation of a Comprehensive Juvenile Delinquency Program.
PUB DATE Feb 75
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Comprehensive Programs; *Counseling Effectiveness; *Delinquent Rehabilitation; Disadvantaged Youth; Family Counseling; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; Urban Youth

ABSTRACT

This paper discribes a comprehensive juvenile delinquency diversion program serving a poverty community in a large urban center, and attempts to evaluate the problems and effects of the program. The target population was primarily minority-group truants, aged 10-15, who had been in trouble with the authorities. The program included recreational and counseling components, utilized an interdisciplinary approach, maintained family counseling services, and at times interfaced with other institutions. Physical activities such as trips, were provided. The program utilized status groups to provide graded rewards and peer group pressure towards increasingly appropriate behaviors. Team conferences were held to provide consistency in approach and sharing of information among the interdisciplinary staff. These conferences eventually became a training vehicle for staff members. Problems in the program included: (1) integrating the interdisciplinary staff; (2) determining the exact purpose of the project (therapy or education); (3) behavior modification; and (4) inadequate mobilizing of the community and its institutions to provide better treatment and programs for the youths. The program was quite successful as measured by offense statistics (fewer contacts with juvenile justice system up to six months after program) and satisfaction among parents and clients. (NG)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED114725

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

EVALUATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PROGRAM

by Howard Young, James Jones and Robert Chazin *

During the past ten years, numerous programs operating with varying theoretical assumptions, have attempted to divert youths from juvenile delinquency. A large number of these projects have focused on providing the youths with one type of treatment modality, or at most, with a bi-modal approach which involved mainly mental health personnel. Frequent criticisms of these programs have focused on their lack of comprehensiveness in meeting the cognitive, social and emotional developmental needs of youths who are potential delinquents, and in their lack of attention to affecting the environment in which these youths live.

Target Population

This paper reports some findings of an evaluation of a comprehensive juvenile delinquency diversion program operated by the Wiltwyck School. The program served a poverty community in a large urban center, the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, a community largely minority-group in composition (84% Black, 12% Puerto Rican, and 4% non-Puerto-Rican white), highly mobile, with a median yearly family income of about $6500, and a juvenile delinquency offense rate higher than that of the rest of the borough, or the city.

Approximately 70% of the youths came from one-parent families which were receiving public assistance. A majority of the youths were reading below their grade level,and had been truant from school for extended periods of time.

The program incorporated varied components designed to meet the diverse developmental needs of Black children aged 10-15 who had been "in trouble" with school or legal authorities.

*Dr. Young is with the Research Department of Community Service Society; Dr. Jones is on the faculty of Columbia University School of Social Work; Dr. Chazin is on the faculty of Fordham University School of Social Service

The Program

The major program component was an all-day supervision program with educational, recreational and counseling units, as well as a community organization component also composed of an interdisciplinary staff. The general goal was to divert the youngsters from the juvenile justice system while enhancing their overall development.

The All-Day Center program which included several program units was operated weekdays from about 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. and divided into several periods. These included sessions in basic academic subjects such as reading, match, etc., as well as sessions in art, physical education or recreational programs. These classes were staffed by teachers and recreational counselors. An important feature of the program was group and individual counseling provided by social workers and para-professionals. There was some staff work with the families of the youths also. This involved counseling and acting as advocates on behalf of the families in their encounters with the varied institutions in the community.

The Program Process of the All Day Supervision Program Included Several Treatment Modalities

Group Counseling

Group counseling was provided by the teams of Community Care Workers and Community Care Aides. In the early Fall, the group counseling patterns followed a model which focused on group discussion, or "rapping." However, after an assessment of this approach noted the youths' limited attention span and their need for more physical activity, a shift was made to activities which did provide greater movement, viz., trips. This enable the social service staff to observe the youths in varied settings and to provide appropriate intervention at the moment any problem behavior occurred. Such counseling

was supplemented by the use of peer group pressure to bring about modification of behavior, and the use of brief discussion periods to analyze each individual's beahvior patterns. Family counseling, involving parents and other members of the family, continued during this period, as did individual counseling for a number of the youths.

Status Groups

One treatment modality of the ADS program was the use of STATUS GROUPS as a means of effecting behavior modification in the youths. Admission into the status group was based on the display of certain approved behaviors and membership in one of the status groups carried with it certain rights and privileges.

The status group concept that was incorporated into the ADS program was based on the theory that mature behavior would be rewarded with token rewards that the youths might find meaningful. Further, it was believed that peer group pressure would provide movement away from unacceptable behavior and toward more mature behavior.

Youths were grouped into three levels, with level 1 as the group with the lowest status. The youngsters were to move to levels 2 and 3 as soon as they exhibited greater responsibility in a number of areas, such as regular attendance, or bringing notebooks and pencils to class. By the time the youngster reached level 3, it was anticipated that he would be able to exhibit a greater sense of responsibility and impulse control. In level 3, greater emphasis was also placed on academic performance, for it was expected that this would be the stepping stone for the return to the public school system.

The modification of behavior was to be brought about by challenging negative behaviors through peer pressure in the status group. Academic func-

tioning was not a criterion for entrance into a status group; rather, effort and attitude were considerations for placement in the higher status group. It should be noted that, on the basis of observers' assessment, many of the group counselors did not understand how to make the group function, nor did the majority of youths participating find the groups and their rewards to be of sufficient interest to motivate them to alter their behavior patterns. (The basis of the grouping arrangement was changed in the program's second year from behavioral status to Reading Level groups.)

Team Conferences (A Coordinating Medium)

To provide consistency in approach and a sharing of information among the interdisciplinary staff, Team Conferences were held. The conferences included the individual's Teacher, Social Worker, Community Care Worker, Recreation Counselor and occasionally a Homemaker or Volunteer who might be involved with the family. The team conference members decided on the movement of the youths from one status level to another.

The Team Conferences served to make each of the staff members aware of the full range of the behavior of the youths they were working with, and provided a basis for making decisions on the placement of youths in various groups. As such, they also served as an integrating mechanism for the staff.

While this was an important element in case work coordination, the team conferences at the start of the program did not adequately serve as a source of professional instruction for the many staff members who needed more training in the handling of emotionally disturbed youths.

In the later stages of the program, the team conference did evolve into a training vehicle for the various staff members. More sophisticated procedures were developed. Discussions held among the staff illustrated the possibility

of using the meetings for working on a generic approach to the counseling or treatment of the youths in the program. Since the conferences included the members of various disciplines, professional as well as para-professional, it became apparent to staff members that the meetings could facilitate inter-disciplinary cooperation and exchange. The opportunity to discuss how the inputs of the various staff members could reinforce individual efforts was seen as a valuable outcome of this approach. In fine, while focusing on the actual problems of youths in the program, this treatment modality was growing into a form of in-service training, coordinating the input of the various disciplines, and so enhancing the effectiveness of their work.

Family Intervention

The ADS program was designed to provide various services to youths, one of the most important of which involved work with their families. The objectives were to provide the parents with aid that would positively affect their treatment of their children, and to mediate between child and parent where necessary, for the benefit of all concerned.

Workers in the program met with parents for various purposes.

1. Information and Referral for Problem Solving

The worker would suggest a plan of action based on a diagnosis of the presenting problem. At times, this involved referring the parent to another agency, or suggesting the continued enrollment of the child in the school, and his participation in some other facet of the Brooklyn Community Care Project/Wiltwyck (BCCP).

2. Intervention with Another Institution

At times, a BCCP staff person was called in to confer on a youngster who was a potential ADS client. The staff member worked to keep the youth in his

setting by serving as an intermediary.

3. Interpreting Behavior Patterns to the Parent

Frequently, the member of the staff working with a family would be called by the mother who complained about her child's engaging in behavior that was objectionable to her (staying out late, fighting with siblings), or other behavior that troubled the parent. The BCCP staff person discussed with the mother the reasons for the child's behavior (information which he frequently obtained from the other staff workers), and made suggestions on how to cope with or modify the behavior.

4. Acting as Advocate to Help Family Meet Basic Needs

The family workers, in a number of cases, assisted the parents in securing services from many agencies: obtaining health care that they needed, or additional income (which sometimes meant steering them to employment possibilities).

When required, some of the personnel accompanied members of the ADS program families to the court to provide assistance and interpretation of the proceedings.

Liaison was also maintained with school system personnel, including guidance counselors and teachers, to provide interpretation of behavior or other assistance for the youths.

Analysis of Problems in Program Process

Integration of Program Components

A major problem area was the relationships among the three staffs, (teachers, social service personnel and recreation counselors) as well as the relationship of these staff with some para-professionals. The structure for working closely together, sharing strengths and coordinating efforts had not been well developed, and staff had not received sufficient training in such

an undertaking. The major program components of the ADS-Day Center, education, social service and recreation, were administratively structured as separate units, each headed by its own coordinator or supervisor, an operational format which suggests why interdepartmental communication and integration may have been a problem.

Whatever problems might have emerged by virtue of this structure appear to have been exacerbated in the early stage of the program by the feeling that the administration viewed the Social Service Unit as the most important program component. This may well have created bad feelings and lowered morale among the other staff members, particularly other direct-service people in the ADS-Day Center (i.e., teachers and recreation staff). At any rate, the other ADS staff felt that Social Service personnel did not provide all of the help they should have -- particularly help in dealing with the serious behavioral problems of some of the youngsters. The Social Service staff had, in the initial phase of operations, appeared to be operating in a compartmentalized fashion: meeting weekly with children for group counseling, extensively involved in attending supervisory and training meetings, isolated from the other staff except for reporting on the personal and/or family psychodynamics for individual youngsters. At one team conference attended by DEI staff, this gap between the two groups seemed most obvious -- the Social Service staff focusing their discussion on the psychodynamics of individual youngsters, while the ADS-Day Center staff was requesting immediate, practical aid in handling the aggressive behavior of the youngsters. Clearly, there was a need for better integration of these two departments.

Improvement in Staff Integration

During the latter part of the program year (Spring '73), changes were

introduced which more effectively integrated the efforts of the disciplines represented, so that a truly interdisciplinary operation was getting underway. For example, Social Service personnel were placed on the school site to be available for "Crisis Intervention" (with acting-out youths). They also shifted from a verbal, group discussion approach, when this also appeared to be unproductive, to a more activity-focused approach (trips, etc.) in the later stages of the program.

Confusion over Program Philosophy

In addition to the need for improved integration of the BCCP components, there appeared to be a need for increased understanding regarding the underlying philosophy of the project. There was some confusion as to whether the primary purpose of the Project was education or therapy. Even more confusing to some were the means to be used in effecting change in youngsters. At least on paper, the basic approach seemed to have been a use of behavioral therapy based on learning theory, through the medium of "status group" peer pressure. One problem in the use of this approach was the lack of value or acceptance of the "reward" or "reinforcement" system by the youths. While the Day Center staff advocated a use of status groups with its attendant reward system for improved performance by youngsters, the Social Service staff appeared to be using a more conventional psychotherapeutic approach, namely, emphasizing the development of "insight." A more serious dilemma, however, was the lack of staff understanding of the behavioral therapy approach. There was some confusion about organization of the status groups, with children being grouped by age rather than by behavioral performance.

There was, in addition, an alternate service philosophy operating, based on the "competency model." Some staff felt that the underlying problem of most

of the youngsters served by the Project was their lack of a sense of competency in any area. They therefore attempted to teach the youths new skills in some area (reading, sports) so as to enhance their self-image and develop a greater sense of competence in some activity.

Attempts at the Development of Comprehensive Approach in Setting Up a Juvenile Delinquency Diversion Program

The Brooklyn Community Care Project/Wiltwyck (BCCP) made an attempt to become a comprehensive, community-wide program that would divert youths from the Juvenile Justice System, while enhancing their physical and mental health. The efforts at integrating and coordinating various components in one project to affect the environmental settings, and the influence of persons in those settings who worked with potentially delinquent youths, were only partially successful. Some of the components, (such as the Homemakers' Unit) were not able to mesh with other services provided in the All-Day Supervision (ADS) Program.

Mobilizing the community and its institutions to provide better treatment and programs for these youths was also only minimally successful, since the community relations component of the project had not been fully developed. However, in the later stages of the program, greater cooperation and coordination was developing between the BCCP, and community groups, the Juvenile Justice System, the schools and other agencies.

Few comprehensive delivery-of-service programs which have attempted to touch base with all the environments in which youths play a role (the home, school, recreation areas, etc.) have been able to succeed. It is a taxing and complex operation which requires many years to build up and it is frequently confounded by conflicts of vested interest in the community. However, in the BCCP, a beginning was made in conceptualizing and implementing an approach to

community coordination, integration, and rationalization of services; in short, in providing a multi-faceted environmental program for youths.

Impact Measures

The "Impact" or "Outcome" of the program can be measured in a number of ways. This evaluation attempted to obtain information through a variety of measures which would determine the program's impact. Some of these measures are briefly described below.

1. Offense Statistics Indicators

The number of offenses committed by the youths while they were in the program, or after they had left the program, was an indicator of the degree to which the program could divert the youths from contact with the Juvenile Justice system.

Data were collected from the Probation Division of the Family Court as well as from the Youth Aid Division on all the youths in the All-Day Supervision Program. Similar information was also compiled on all youths who were referred to the program but who, for various reasons, were not accepted.

Utilizing this indicator as a measure of success, the project could be viewed as having had a positive impact upon the youth in it. For those who had been truant and had behavioral problems, but who had not committed a delinquent act prior to entering the program (or who had, at least, not been caught), not one came into contact with the Juvenile Justice system during the period under investigation, even though many, by that time had been out of the program for six months or more. Available research indicates this population has a higher probability of becoming delinquent than a non-truant population. Of those youths who had committed deliquent acts prior to their entrance into the program (and they constituted only a small number of the population) the recidivism rates were somewhat lower than the rates generally

anticipated for this population.

2. Parents' and Clients' Opinions of Diversion Program

The consumers of any program can generally provide information as to whether the services they received were beneficial or not. With this view in mind, the parents of the youths in the All-Day Supervision Program, as well as the youths themselves, were interviewed by means of detailed questionnaires.

The responses provided specific information on their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the program.

Overview

Parents and youths who participated in the BCCP All-Day Supervision Program were very positive in their ratings of the program.

Parents Report Positive Rapport with Clients

Both groups singled out the positive relationships with staffs, who were both sympathetic counselors and effective teachers, providing activities that were interesting, enjoyable and educational. The parents noted that the staff had apparently been able to achieve some behavior modification in their children, which resulted in their attaining greater self-discipline and maturity, and which helped them to "keep out of trouble." Many parents commented on this positive relationship between the staff and their children, stating that this interaction was superior to that between their children and the public school teachers.

Parents Want Heavier Academic Emphasis

The parents indicated that they too had received advice and helpful assistance from the staff, and were interested in obtaining more services from them.

Although parents suggested that the recreational program was of interest to their children, they indicated that they would like to see a heavier emphasis placed on increasing the educational programming, particularly in the area of reading skills.

Youths' Positive Reactions

Youths attending the program also rated their counselors and teachers generously with the recreational counselors receiving the highest accolades. The friendship and the sympathetic attention to their problems, as well as the "good advice" provided were among the positive features of the program mentioned by the youths. The program itself apparently kept the interest of the majority of the youths and provided them with new things to learn, and for some, new skills in reading and sports.

Negative Feelings

Among the negative notes sounded was one that focused on the youths' perception of the BCCP. A large number of youths, many of whom rated the overall program highly, suggested that they would not select the same program if they had a choice to make. A number of them stated that the project was for "youths in trouble," and that since the general perception of the program held by others was that the BCCP was a place for "youths in trouble," it was like a correctional agency. This image may put off some youths who do not like to be "stigmatized" and who may not view themselves as "youth in trouble" or as delinquents.

However, considering the generally highly positive, specific ratings made about the various elements of the program, the overall conclusion of this survey would be that the program was given high marks by both parents and participating youths, and was viewed as a positive influence on the behavior of the participants.

Summary and Conclusions

The Wiltwyck BCCP can be considered successful as a Juvenile Justice Diversion Program in that very few potentially delinquent youths (only 8%) had any contact with the juvenile justice system at any time during the period they were in the program or within six months after they had left the program.

Our interpretation of this reasonably successful outcome of the program is based on the theory that there is no one cause for committing a delinquent act by adolescents; rather (as has been suggested), youths commit delinquent acts because they experience, among other things: low self-esteem, inadequate role models, delinquent peer group pressures and perhaps, just too much tedious time on their hands.

This suggests that when we cannot provide an adequate diagnosis to explain the reason a youth has committed a delinquent act, and thereby prescribe a specific treatment or program, we may have to provide a comprehensive program. This multi-modal program with an interdisciplinary staff might, in its "scattershot" approach, hit the youths with one of its ameliorative components that might just be suited to his needs.

Although there were many problems in the operation of the program -- particularly those of interdisciplinary functioning, staff turnover and uncertainty of funding -- the variety of activities and treatment modalities apparently met many of the needs of the youths in the program, both truants, and those who showed evidence of other behavioral problems.

February 1975